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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 14th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ALOM (Bangladesh)
(Vice-Chairman)

later: Mr. SENGWE (Zimbabwe)
(Chairman)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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ORGANIZATION OF WORK

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In the absence of Mr. Sengwe (Zimbabwe), Mr. Alom (Bangladesh), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 129: FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PROTECTION FORCE, THE UNITED NATIONS CONFIDENCE RESTORATION OPERATION IN CROATIA, THE UNITED NATIONS PREVENTIVE DEPLOYMENT FORCE AND THE UNITED NATIONS PEACE FORCES HEADQUARTERS (A/50/696/Add.6 and Add.7; A/51/305, A/51/389, A/51/491 and A/51/497).

1. Mr. TAKASU (Controller), introducing the reports of the Secretary-General on the item under consideration, said that document A/50/696/Add.7 contained the financial performance report of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), the United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation in Croatia (UNCRO), the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP) and the United Nations Peace Forces headquarters (UNPF) for the period 1 July to 31 December 1995. The performance report reflected expenditures of $861,340,900 gross, resulting in an unencumbered balance of $27,689,600 gross. Most of the savings had resulted from the early repatriation of troops, beginning in October 1995, and the decisions of the Security Council to terminate the mandates of UNPROFOR and UNCRO on 20 December 1995 and 15 January 1996, respectively. As a result of the reduction in the level of operations, there had been fewer requirements for civilian staff, helicopters and the purchase of additional vehicles, containers or other items of equipment that had been included in the cost estimates.

2. The additional information referred to in paragraph 24 of the report had been received that very day; it would be analyzed by the Secretary-General, who would report to the General Assembly on the action to be taken. As indicated in paragraph 29, the additional action to be taken by the General Assembly was a decision on the treatment of the additional unencumbered balance of $227,406,878 gross for the period 1 October 1994 to 31 December 1995.

3. The report contained in document A/50/696/Add.6 was submitted pursuant to paragraph 15 of General Assembly resolution 50/235, in which the Assembly had urged the Secretary-General to review, on an urgent basis, the concerns regarding the decentralization of administrative functions and the reduction of the overall number of administrative staff. In the report of the Secretary-General (A/50/696/Add.5), it had been proposed that, effective 1 July 1996, central support would only be provided to the new missions in the areas of provisioning and warehousing of motor vehicle spare parts, maintenance of the communications network and provision of fixed-wing air support. An in-depth review of the decentralization of additional administrative support functions had subsequently been undertaken during the month of June 1996 and the results were contained in the current report.

4. As stated in paragraph 14, the review had shown that the creation of an additional procedural tier would render support functions more cumbersome and reactive rather than proactive. Separating the responsibility for achieving results from the responsibility for providing support required clearly defined authority, reporting channels and lines of accountability in a centralized environment. The functions that required centralization had already been centralized at Headquarters in the Departments of Peace-keeping Operations and

Administration and Management. Further centralization at the regional level would only duplicate the work and create overlaps (para. 15). As indicated in paragraph 18, the analysis had identified several specific functions that could be centralized in theatre, including the communications master network centre; the wide area network hub for providing access to electronic mail; the operation of fixed-wing aircraft and services to aircraft of the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES) and the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH) flying to and from Zagreb as required; control of the movement of personnel and cargo through Croatia; and the international travel of personnel, including those assisting with immigration and customs formalities. As stated in paragraph 23, the revised requirements for central support services would not necessitate a change in the overall staffing projections, but would require a redistribution of the proposed staffing provided in annex IV of the report of the Secretary-General of 29 March 1996 (A/50/696/Add.5).

5. Finally, the report contained in document A/51/389 was submitted pursuant to paragraph 16 of General Assembly 50/235, in which the Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to develop revised cost estimates for third-party claims and adjustments, following completion of a thorough study by the Legal Counsel. On the question of limitations of liability (para. 38), given the substantial increase in the number and amount of third-party claims against the United Nations, the General Assembly might wish to consider, inter alia, financial and temporal limitations, counter-claims and set-offs, and recovery from the States contributing contingents in specific cases of gross negligence, wilful misconduct or international criminal liability of the member of the force. It was currently estimated that the requirements for settlement of United Nations Peace Forces third-part liability claims amounted to $15.5 million. The actions to be taken by the General Assembly at its fifty-first session (para. 54) were to note the report of the Secretary-General and to endorse the proposals and recommendations regarding limitations on the liability of the Organization.

6. Mr. MSELLE (Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) on the financial performance of the peacekeeping operations under consideration (A/51/497), said that the Advisory Committee had experienced considerable difficulty in analyzing the report on budget performance for UNPF. Accordingly, it had requested the Secretariat to expedite the process of improving the format and presentation of performance reports, since changes in the budget and financial cycle for peacekeeping operations and large investments in new technology had now given it the tools to improve performance reporting. Of the amounts obligated for contingent-owned equipment, some $113.6 million remained to be reviewed and further negotiated with the countries concerned. In addition, the valuation of $21.2 million in voluntary contributions using standard United Nations procedures was yet to be done.

7. He wished to draw the Committee's attention to paragraphs 13 to 19 of the Advisory Committee's report, in particular to the problem of the payment by the United Nations of excise tax in the amount of $37 million, the need for control and better management of such items as petrol, oil and lubricants, and matters relating to accommodation. The question of excise charges needed to be

vigorously pursued by the United Nations, which should also investigate and recover losses wherever appropriate.

8. In paragraph 29 of his report (A/50/696/Add.7), the Secretary-General proposed that the General Assembly should consider the treatment of the additional unencumbered balance of $227,406,878 gross for the period from 1 October 1994 to 31 December 1995. Normally such amounts should be credited to Member States. The additional information requested by the Advisory Committee in connection with the review of the status of unencumbered balance was contained in the annex to its report. An amount of $291.4 million gross was yet to be assessed for the periods indicated in the annex.

9. In paragraph 20 of its report, the Advisory Committee recommended that the assessment for the period under review and for the period ending 31 October 1996 should be set off against the unencumbered balance. No immediate action, however, was required from the General Assembly. The Advisory Committee had requested the Secretary-General to submit to it an updated report in February 1997, at which time the Advisory Committee would submit definitive recommendations on the exact amounts to be assessed and set off against the unencumbered balance. Assessment for the periods starting in January 1996 should be handled in the context of the relevant performance reports.

10. Introducing the report of ACABQ on the question of third-party claims (A/51/491), he said that the Advisory Committee was of the view that such claims arose from all peacekeeping missions and should therefore in future be handled under item 140 (a). The Secretary-General had submitted a clear report on the subject (A/51/389), in which he had looked afresh at the whole question of third-party claims, taking into account the increasing number of claims filed against the United Nations as a result of the expansion of peacekeeping operations. Subject to the comments in paragraphs 9, 10 and 11 of its report, the Advisory Committee agreed with the report of the Secretary-General and welcomed, in particular, the development of the concept of operational necessity.

11. Paragraphs 12 to 14 of the Advisory Committee's report contained its comments on costs. The information requested by the Advisory Committee on claims which had been filed so far with the Organization indicated undocumented claims amounting to $70.7 million. That sort of information was compelling evidence of the need for the United Nations to develop as quickly as possible effective measures which could limit its liability. Furthermore, in order to facilitate the processing of claims, including the quick identification of frivolous claims, the Advisory Committee recommended the development of a standard format for the filing of claims, a procedure that would expedite the rejection by the Organization of claims which were not filed properly.

12. Finally, in paragraph 15 of its report, the Advisory Committee recommended that the Secretary-General's proposals concerning the limitation of the Organization's liability should be endorsed by the General Assembly and that the Secretary-General should be requested to present, through the Advisory Committee, a report on specific measures, including criteria and guidelines for implementing the principles outlined in his report.

13. Mr. GUERRA (Office of Internal Oversight Services), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) (A/51/305), said that, as requested by the General Assembly, the Office had conducted a review of the management structure of the civilian component of UNPF in order to determine whether that structure was appropriate to provide the necessary support services; to assess the adequacy of the management and internal control systems in place; and to determine whether the use of United Nations human, physical and financial resources was adequately planned, organized, directed and monitored, and whether value was being obtained for money.

14. OIOS recognized the constraints under which UNPF management was forced to operate and which were often beyond its control. Those constraints included the numerous changes in its mandate, as well as other uncertainties in its operating environment, delays in budgetary authorization, cumbersome and inflexible procurement practices and procedures, a lack of experienced United Nations staff, the frequent rotation of personnel, the difficulty of integrating military and civilian components, and the intractability of some local authorities with respect to their obligations under the various status-of-forces agreements. Although those obstacles contributed to the difficulties of managing UNPF, most of the deficiencies were clearly the result of shortcomings and inadequacies in planning, organizing, directing and monitoring.

15. With regard to the management structure, since its inception, UNPF had had four Chief Administrative Officers. During the tenure of the second Chief Administrative Officer, a major expansion of the Mission's operations had taken place and the management structure that had been formed during that period had had a great impact on the inefficiencies which had followed. In March 1995, the new Director of Administration had restructured management functions, downsized his office staff and decentralized the management structure; that had proved to be beneficial for the day-to-day running of the Mission. It was therefore of critical importance to establish an appropriate management structure right from the start of any future peacekeeping mission.

16. Major deficiencies had also been found in the area of internal controls, which called for the consistent application of standards for documentation, execution and recording of transactions, segregation of duties, and supervision. The review by OIOS had revealed that those standards were not consistently applied by UNPF in a number of areas, including cash management, procurement and the maintenance of accounting records, particularly the reconciliation of cash accounts. Inadequate controls had also been noted in respect of contingent-owned and United Nations-owned equipment. The establishment of adequate internal controls at an early stage was a key requirement which should be borne in mind for future peacekeeping missions, since it would provide reasonable assurance that financial and administrative matters were properly handled during the life of the mission.

17. The third area in which deficiencies were found was that of planning, organizing, directing and monitoring. Much better planning at the working level was required in almost all management areas of UNPF. The report drew attention to several examples of shortcomings in that area which had resulted in unnecessary expenditure amounting to several million dollars. As a result of the review, OIOS had recommended that all those involved in peacekeeping

missions should pay close attention to the need for planning, including overall planning strategy, mission planning, mission statements, work plans and contingency planning.

18. In response to the recommendations of OIOS, corrective action had been taken in a number of cases, while other recommendations were in the process of implementation. In view of the current status of UNPF, other findings and recommendations should be regarded as lessons to be implemented in future missions.

19. Mr. KELLY (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that there were a number of important lessons to be learned from the experiences of UNPROFOR and UNPF. The sheer scale of the UNPROFOR/UNPF Mission had resulted in operating costs of almost $4.8 billion and explained why Member States had a great and understandable interest in matters pertaining to its liquidation. The States members of the European Union had not only to meet more than one third of those costs but had also made a substantial contribution to the conduct of the Mission through the provision of troops, equipment and voluntary funding. The European Union was concerned at the generally slow pace of liquidation of the Mission and at the delays in the processing and settlement of outstanding claims from troop contributors, including claims in respect of contingent-owned equipment. He reiterated the need for transparency on the part of the Secretariat with respect to the criteria used in settling outstanding claims.

20. In the light of those considerations, the European Union welcomed the fact that the report on the review by OIOS of the management structure of the civilian staff component of UNPF (A/51/305) had been submitted to the General Assembly for consideration. It had noted with interest the comments by OIOS concerning defects in planning on the part of UNPF management, which had resulted in one instance in unnecessary expenditure of approximately $6 million. The European Union hoped that the recommendations made by OIOS would be taken into account by the Secretariat in the planning of future peacekeeping missions.

21. As a rule, the European Union did not favour the granting of commitment authority without also providing the Secretary-General with the necessary authority to assess at the same time. It had been prepared, however, to make an exception and to agree to provide commitment authority alone through the end of October in order to allow for proper consideration of the performance report contained in document A/50/696/Add.7.

22. With regard to the reports of the Secretary-General and the Advisory Committee on the financial performance of UNPF for the period to 31 December 1995, the European Union found itself in general agreement. Its consideration of the Advisory Committee's report had, however, been hampered by the fact that it contained frequent references to the report of the Board of Auditors on the accounts of the United Nations peacekeeping operations for the biennium ending 31 December 1995, which had not yet been made available to delegations. The same references to the Board of Auditors' report also occurred in the Advisory Committee's report on third-party claims. Steps should be taken to ensure that such situations were avoided in future; moreover, it would be unreasonable to expect the General Assembly to take action on the item until such time as it was in receipt of the same information as that which had been available to the Advisory Committee.

23. A common theme in both of the reports of the Advisory Committee relating to the current item was the problem of non-compliance on the part of host Governments with their obligations under status-of-forces and other agreements. The European Union had noted with concern the numerous instances reported by the Advisory Committee in which UNPROFOR/UNPF had been forced, under protest, to pay excise duties and commercial rents which they were not properly required to pay. The European Union fully subscribed to the Advisory Committee's views on the matter, particularly those expressed in paragraph 11 of its report on third-party claims (A/51/491). It also supported the Advisory Committee's recommendations in paragraphs 14 and 18 of document A/51/497 and urged the Secretary-General to take the necessary action to rectify the situation and to recover the losses to the Organization resulting from the reported violation by the Governments concerned of the provisions of the status-of-forces agreement. Information on the results of his efforts, including revised estimates, where necessary, should be included in the Secretary-General's next report on the financing of UNPF. The European Union furthermore called upon all Member States which were hosts to United Nations peacekeeping missions to conclude status-of-forces agreements with the United Nations as quickly as possible when a mission had been authorized and, having done so, to adhere to the terms of such agreements.

24. The European Union had noted with concern the comments of the Advisory Committee on the lack of satisfactory explanations for savings and overruns and on the reported finding of the Board of Auditors that aircraft contracts had been provided for services far in excess of the needs of UNPROFOR/UNPF. It supported the Advisory Committee's conclusions on the latter point and requested more detailed information on the amount expended on aircraft contracts compared to the true level of needs. It also supported the Advisory Committee's conclusions on the need for more detailed explanations of the changes made in the accounting arrangements for reimbursement of consumables. Finally it would welcome further clarification of the reasons for the additional requirements of almost $23 million for rations.

25. The European Union noted that a substantial unencumbered balance remained in the UNPF account and supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation that the remaining unencumbered balance could be used to offset the outstanding requirements of UNPF for the period under review, on the understanding that the financial requirements of the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia were also taken into account and were not in any way jeopardized. The Union would welcome information from the Secretariat on the actual financing needs of UNPF for the finalization of the liquidation process.

26. The European Union also supported the Advisory Committee's observations contained in paragraph 24 of its report (A/51/497) regarding the issues addressed in the Secretary-General's report on the decentralization of administrative functions in the successor missions of UNMIBH, UNTAES and UNPREDEP.

27. Referring to the issues raised in the reports of the Secretary-General and of the Advisory Committee on third-party claims, he said that the European Union believed that steps should be taken to limit United Nations liabilities in the matter of third-party claims arising from peacekeeping missions. It therefore looked forward to receiving the Secretary-General's follow-up report containing

recommendations concerning specific measures and modalities for putting into effect his suggestions for limiting the Organization's liability with regard to third-party-claims.

28. Mr. GRANT (United States of America) said that the reports of the Secretary-General and of ACABQ had made reference to voluntary contributions in kind which had not been evaluated under standard United Nations rules. One of those contributions had been from the United States Government, which had provided information to resolve its claims. His delegation was concerned about the reported payment of excise duty, which was a violation of the status-of-forces agreement. It looked forward to the second report of OIOS on UNPF.

29. Mr. HANSON (Canada) said that, since Canada was a major troop contributor, his delegation had welcomed the establishment of the strategic database as a mechanism to monitor cost recovery. Although the information on amounts owed to Member States was useful, there should be greater transparency between the Secretariat and Member States in the area of reimbursements. Unlike the twice-monthly status of contributions document, there was no systematic reporting by the Secretariat on the amounts owed to all troop contributors. In addition, no mechanism provided information to Member States when there were delays in reimbursement; such information was most often learned through informal contacts. For example, his delegation had recently been aware that reimbursements for UNPF vehicle spare parts had been suspended, yet there had been no official notification of the decision from the Secretariat nor any information on measures being taken to address the problem.

30. The question of reimbursements to troop contributors was one of fundamental importance. If Member States were to continue to participate in peacekeeping operations, they must have some assurance that reimbursement of their costs would be forthcoming. To facilitate better communication between the Secretariat and troop contributors, his delegation proposed that the Secretariat should produce a monthly, or at least quarterly, document that would list what was owed to each troop contributor and indicate the actual funds available in each peacekeeping account to reimburse Member States. That information could be included in the strategic database, which could also list assessed contributions to date and outstanding contributions on a monthly basis.

31. With regard to payment delays, his delegation called on the Secretariat to keep troop contributors informed more regularly through official notification when there were suspensions of payments as a result of a decision taken by the Secretariat.

32. Mr. Sengwe (Zimbabwe), Chairman, took the chair.

33. Mr. GREIVER (Uruguay) said that his delegation shared the concerns raised regarding the strategic database. The circulation of documents through the Internet was a very useful practice which should be continued.

AGENDA ITEM 116: PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1996-1997 (continued)
(A/50/7/Add.16; A/51/7/Add.1; A/C.5/50/57 and Add.1)

34. Mr. SHAH (India), noting that the Secretary-General had stated that savings of the magnitude called for in General Assembly resolution 50/214 could not be achieved without service reductions and delays and postponement of programmes, a view which was shared by ACABQ, said that, that being the case, the real issue was whether Member States were prepared to provide additional funds to allow the Secretary-General to implement all mandated programmes and activities, or whether the General Assembly wished to undertake a review of activities with a view to eliminating some of them.

35. It would be useful to have further information on whether the proposed programme changes were a consequence of executive decisions by the Secretary-General or of legislative decisions taken by the General Assembly. His delegation would prefer to see additional funds provided by Member States to implement fully all mandated programmes and activities, but if Member States were unwilling to provide the funds, the only other option was to change programmes and activities to ensure that they were realistically achievable within the resources available. The General Assembly must also decide how to provide for the financing of deferred or postponed activities in subsequent budgets.

36. On the issue of staff reductions, the questions raised by ACABQ in paragraph 26 of its report (A/51/7/Add.1) needed to be answered. It would be useful to know if the effort to maintain a vacancy rate of 11.8 per cent for Professionals was a way of achieving the $104 million savings target set in resolution 50/214, or whether it was an attempt to accommodate the costs of such additional mandates as the operations in Haiti and Guatemala. His delegation would like clarification as to how the Secretariat intended to deal with additional unfunded mandates for operations in those countries. It believed that, if additional funding could not be provided for new unfunded mandates, costs should only be absorbed within the budget cluster from which the new activity would normally be funded. Any efforts at absorption must therefore occur only in part II of the current budget which dealt with political affairs and peacekeeping.

37. Mrs. ALBRIGHT (United States of America) said that the Secretary-General, as the chief administrative officer of the United Nations, had full authority and responsibility for the difficult task of operating the Organization within the budget approved by the General Assembly. It was encouraging that the Secretary-General was able to indicate that the programme of work approved by the General Assembly was being carried out in full, subject only to the adjustments required to accommodate activities within available resources. It was also encouraging that there were no indications that the budget was being overspent. For the Secretary-General, the central challenge in the budgetary process was to reconcile the level of expenditure with the earlier budget projections, within the overall approved budget of 2,608 million.

38. Just as the Secretary-General had his responsibilities as chief administrative officer, Member States had a responsibility to raise legitimate questions and seek sufficient information to permit them to make accurate judgements about whether the resolutions of the General Assembly were being

implemented. Member States would contribute little, however, if they were to take upon themselves the job of scrutinizing every decision the Secretary-General made. That level of micromanagement was a recipe for the paralysis of the institution.

39. Member States had a larger responsibility, namely to approve budgets that reflected sound priorities and did not exceed the amount Member States were willing to contribute to the operation of the Organization. The budget ceiling approved by the General Assembly must be considered firm. Her Government expected to pay its full share of the budget for 1996, just as it had met its obligations in full for 1995. Evidence of discipline in the establishment and funding of programme activities was essential if Member States were to have the confidence required to fund those activities on a reliable basis. That was true of her Government and, judging by the fact that almost half of the States Members of the United Nations were currently behind in their payments, it was true of many other Governments too.

40. Her Government's commitment to the reform, revitalization and increased discipline of the United Nations stemmed from a belief in its value and the desire to make it more effective in preparation for the twenty-first century. The successful implementation of the current budget was a critical test of the progress being made. Thus far, there was reason both to be encouraged and to continue to raise specific legitimate and substantive questions. Her Government looked forward to cooperating with the Committee and with the Secretariat to ensure the successful functioning of the United Nations budget process.

41. Mr. HANSON-HALL (Ghana) said that the Committee should be guided by General Assembly resolution 41/213, which provided the basic framework for considering and approving the budget proposals. That resolution emphasized the primary role of the General Assembly, and particularly its prerogatives in fashioning mandated programmes and activities. His delegation welcomed the support for the validity of resolution 41/213 as expressed by ACABQ in its most recent reports (A/50/7/Add.16 and A/51/7/Add.1).

42. At the current stage of its history, the United Nations needed a strong Secretary-General, supported by an efficient Secretariat, to manage its affairs. The Secretariat was, however, expected to exercise its authority within the framework established by the General Assembly, as demonstrated by the reaffirmation of resolution 41/213 in resolution 50/214, by which it had approved the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997.

43. The Secretary-General had identified possible areas in which savings could be achieved during the budget period under review. His delegation supported in principle the measures aimed at streamlining procedure and taking advantage of technological innovations. However, the Secretariat had not made it clear how the numerous deferrals, delays and postponements in approved programmes would affect the ability of the United Nations to carry out its mandates. The Secretary-General had sought to achieve savings by maintaining a higher rate of personnel vacancies than that approved by the General Assembly in resolution 50/214. His delegation agreed with the Advisory Committee that the issue of vacancies was central to the budget exercise and that the Secretariat should not carry out any involuntary separations solely to achieve budgetary savings. His delegation's position was based on its concern that too high a vacancy rate in

the Professional category was likely to have an adverse impact on the programme activities approved by the General Assembly. All proposals submitted should have the priorities identified by Member States in mind. Clarification was needed to enable the Committee to discuss budget proposals effectively.

44. Mr. GANGAN (Philippines) said that, while the Secretary-General had repeatedly stated that the savings called for in resolution 50/214 could not be achieved without changes in programmes and reductions in staff, it was not clear how the effects of such measures on the quality of programme delivery could be mitigated through efficiency gains. His delegation concurred with the observations of ACABQ (A/51/7/Add.1, para. 8) that little progress had been made in substantiating the financial effect of the proposed changes and in analyzing their impact on programme delivery. It was, moreover, unclear whether the proposed changes in programmes had been made on the Secretariat's initiative or were the result of intergovernmental review.

45. With regard to staff reductions, his delegation had noted with deep concern that the proposed savings would largely be achieved through higher vacancy rates than those called for in resolution 50/214. It had further noted that the highest vacancy rates for Professional posts were in the areas of international and regional cooperation for development, which were of particular importance to developing countries. It was unclear what criteria had been used for the personnel actions taken, especially with regard to involuntary separation. His delegation urged the Secretariat to make greater efforts to redeploy the staff concerned from the developing countries.

46. With regard to the financing of new mandates, the Secretary-General had been unable to respond to the requests for a report on possible absorption contained in resolutions 50/231 and 50/232. General Assembly resolution 41/213 had, however, established procedures for dealing with the financing of new mandates. In principle, his delegation was not averse to the concept of savings, but it believed that the manner in which they were being implemented would diminish the unique and international character of the Organization and might even result in higher costs.

47. Mr. IRAGORRI (Colombia) said that delegations did not have sufficient information to judge what repercussions the economy measures would have on programme execution. He wondered why the necessary information had not been provided. Initially, the Committee itself had spoken of economy measures as a means of arriving at a consensus resolution on the proposed programme budget for the current biennium. At the time, in view of the intransigence of some positions in the negotiations, it had seemed preferable to adopt a consensus resolution rather than to proceed to a vote or to postpone the debate; the latter course would have left the United Nations without the legislative mandate necessary to continue the normal implementation of its programmes and activities. It had also been made clear at the time that any additional mandates must be executed within existing resources. Member States should, however, be aware that it was their own decision, which had been taken with the best of intentions, that had generated the current uncertainty surrounding the programme budget. In the view of his delegation, it would be very difficult for the United Nations to execute its mandates in full when the level of those mandates had not only been maintained but increased, without corresponding additional resources. The Organization's mandates were so broad and complex and

the needs to be met so great that the existing financial resources were insufficient. He did not believe that the achievement of greater efficiency at any cost to programme execution should be the main priority. Everyone desired a more efficient Organization, but he wondered if, in order to achieve that goal, members were prepared to sacrifice the benefits that humanity expected from the United Nations. There was only one possible answer to that question: when efficiency began to have a negative effect on programme execution, efficiency must give way.

48. Almost a year had elapsed since the adoption of resolution 50/214, yet the information which was needed for final decisions to be taken had still not been provided. When the final report was received, two possibilities would exist. It might be that the economy measures would not affect the overall implementation of programmes within the biennium; if so, the Committee could welcome the efficiency measures adopted. It was the second possibility that raised questions, the possibility that the Secretariat would inform members that, despite all efforts, programme execution for the biennium would be affected. In that event, the General Assembly could either assess the resources necessary to make up the budgetary shortfall, taking into account the cost to each of its Member States and also the refusal of one Member State to pay its assessment, or set priorities and decide in an equitable manner which activities or programmes should be cut or postponed. That, however, would be tantamount to a renegotiation of the budget. Delegations must be aware of the possibility that resources would not be sufficient to execute mandates in full, and they must face the consequences of their decisions and choose one of the alternatives he had mentioned.

49. Mr. DEINEKO (Russian Federation) said that his delegation noted the measures that had been taken to achieve additional savings of $104 million over the biennium, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/214, without affecting the full implementation of mandated programmes and activities. Regrettably, however, the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/50/57/Add.1) provided little indication of the budgetary consequences of the changes proposed or of their impact on programme delivery, and failed to make clear whether they derived from the initiative of the Secretary-General himself or were the result of intergovernmental review. In that connection, he was pleased to note that measures had already been taken by some regional economic commissions and stressed the importance of conducting efficiency reviews on an ongoing basis to attain the necessary objectives.

50. While his delegation acknowledged that the Secretary-General faced a difficult task, it believed that it was possible to achieve savings without affecting the full implementation of mandated programmes and activities. In that regard, it supported the three-phase approach developed by the Secretary-General to enhance the efficiency of the Organization's activities. It was unfortunate, however, that the Secretary-General's report had not provided information on even the measures required under the first phase.

51. The vacancy rate of 11.8 per cent for the Professional category mentioned by the Administration was at variance with the recommendations of the General Assembly and might have a negative impact on programme delivery. There were other possible ways to achieve savings. The utility of buy-outs and involuntary separations appeared minimal in terms of cost savings, and there was a

possibility of appeal in the event of involuntary separation which might, in fact, result in additional costs.

52. His delegation supported the Advisory Committee's recommendation (A/51/7/Add.1, para. 38) that the Secretary-General should update his estimates in the context of the first performance report on the budget for the biennium 1996-1997 and that the General Assembly should consider and approve revised appropriations for the current biennium at that time.

53. Lastly, his delegation did not believe that a reduction in budgetary expenditure was an end in itself, but rather a way to achieve a more efficient and streamlined Organization geared to specific priorities.

AGENDA ITEM 114: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued) (A/51/6 and A/51/16 (Parts I and II))

54. Mr. TOYA (Japan) said that both the perspective (A/51/6 (Perspective)), which sought to provide an overview of the role and work of the United Nations over the period 1998-2001, and the note (A/51/6 (Note)) were too general, and failed to identify priorities. The task of prioritizing should, in fact, be carried out by Member States, on the basis of the proposal of the Secretary-General, if necessary. Four activities were of particular importance: the promotion of peace, including preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peace-building; disarmament in its micro and macro aspects; development efforts, especially in Africa; and humanitarian assistance activities.

55. His delegation was prepared to endorse the note, with some reservations. In particular, paragraph 61, dealing with priority activities, should list other areas such as drugs, crime, the environment and the clearance of landmines. The Committee should engage in a thorough discussion of priority areas for the medium-term plan as soon as possible.

56. Mr. GUTTERØD (Norway) welcomed the format and structure of the proposed medium-term plan, which was intended to provide the Secretary-General with a tool to transform the priorities of Member States into budgetary realities. His delegation underlined the competence and responsibility of the Secretary-General to determine how mandates should be implemented.

57. The perspective represented a visionary attempt to indicate current problems, trends and challenges, and the instruments available to the Organization to cope with them. Globalization, although to the advantage of most countries, would leave pockets of poverty in individual countries or regions. Access to world markets would not be to the benefit of countries if the prices of their export commodities remained low and they were sealed off from capital flows. Economic and social development must be kept as one important priority of the Organization to offset the negative repercussions of global trends. Through its economic and social activities, the United Nations must help to contain the threat of marginalization and must improve its efforts to promote African development. The Organization must also be prepared to deal with the impact of fragmentation. In the aftermath of the cold war, States had broken apart, government authority and the protection of citizens had evaporated, and people had become internally displaced. On the other hand, fragmentation had led to democratic development, decentralization and an

emerging private sector. His delegation welcomed the comments in the perspective on democratization and civil society.

58. The United Nations should concentrate on the promotion of peace, security and human rights, development, rapid response to human and environmental emergencies and respect for and compliance with international law. His delegation supported the priorities indicated in paragraph 56 of the perspective; that document should constitute an integral part of the medium-term plan. The note, too, could serve as a coherent tool in the difficult process of transforming the visions outlined in the perspective into action. Both documents would furnish the General Assembly with a solid basis for active strategic planning, which had been inadequately engaged in in previous years.

AGENDA ITEM 120: HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT (continued) (A/51/304, A/51/421 and A/51/475; A/C.5/49/63 and A/C.5/49/64; A/C.5/50/64; A/C.5/51/1, A/C.5/51/2, A/C.5/51/3, A/C.5/51/6 and A/C.5/51/7)

59. Mrs. INCERA (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, while the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management, speaking in the Fifth Committee, had spoken of dialogue between management and staff representatives on matters affecting staff welfare and conditions of service, the President of the Staff Committee, on Staff Day, had painted a far gloomier picture. Indeed, it appeared that it was no longer possible to speak of dialogue. At the most recent meeting of the Staff Management Coordination Committee (SMCC), the staff representatives had encountered an indifferent, if not hostile, and unreceptive environment which had not permitted constructive work and they had expressed deep concern over the deterioration in staff-management relations. The relationship between staff representatives and the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) was also not what it should be. The Committee had a responsibility to deal with the strained staff-management relations as a matter of priority; it could not continue to disregard the fundamental problems that had become persistent over recent years. The Group of 77 and China believed strongly that the staff were the most valuable asset of the Organization.

60. Under the Secretary-General's strategy for human resources management, a large number of tasks had been assigned to the Office of Human Resources Management relating to administration, support for staff development, projecting the needs of the Organization, securing the required skills and expertise from as broad a number of countries as possible, and ensuring that staff welfare and well-being were provided for and maintained. The Group of 77 and China had, however, observed with concern that in recent months there had been a tendency towards "corporatist" management, far removed from the purposes and principles of the Charter and the initial objectives of the initiative. The Secretary-General himself had indicated that he was moving to provide a corporate support role within the global Secretariat. That was not the approach originally intended and expected of the Organization. The United Nations was not a company. It did not sell a product whose production could be increased or decreased at will according to profits. The founding fathers had had no intention of establishing an institution which functioned on the basis of value for money. It was of extreme importance that the trend towards a so-called

"corporate" mentality should not destroy the fabric of the international civil service.

61. It had become clear that the proposed reform of the internal system of justice had run into difficulties. The Secretary-General should consider submitting new proposals based on the views expressed in the Fifth and Sixth Committees.

62. The Group of 77 and China reiterated the need to ensure the widest possible equitable geographical representation, a factor which was of particular relevance in view of the call for a freeze on recruitment in order to achieve budgetary reductions. In that regard, she asked how the freeze was being applied, and how many staff from developing and developed countries had been terminated. She wondered whether the Administration was taking serious account of the views of the staff in the process. She noted that the staff were seldom informed, and that on many occasions the media were more aware of the fate of the staff than those involved. That did not reflect a healthy staff-management relationship. The Group of 77 and China were seriously concerned about the impact of the reduction measures on the representation of its member countries, particularly since most of the unrepresented and under-represented Member States belonged to the Group.

63. The Performance Appraisal System (PAS) was a private enterprise conception that might work perfectly well in a profit-oriented institution. However, international civil servants implemented work programmes that were not quantifiable, and she therefore questioned the real value of PAS and its impact on the Organization's efficiency. Exorbitant sums were being paid to consultants to organize PAS courses at a time of budgetary cuts in programmes and activities that were far more important.

64. Moreover, no comprehensive career development system had been presented to the staff, despite repeated requests from the General Assembly for over a decade. Instead, the Secretary-General's report projected an impression that PAS had superseded the requirement for career development. The policy in recent years of not offering career opportunities to the staff had tilted the scale in favour of fixed-term and non-career staff, depriving the Organization of a core institutional capacity essential for continuity and effectiveness.

65. The Group of 77 and China were deeply concerned that, despite the Secretary-General's pledge to freeze recruitment in the face of the financial crisis, recruitment had continued, as had promotions to posts vacated by nationals of developing countries, often to the benefit of staff from industrialized countries. That reduced opportunities for redeploying staff, offset the savings generated, and decreased the representation of developing countries. She requested updated information on staff members who were subject to redeployment by contractual status, gender, nationality, job title, rank and duration of service.

66. According to the Secretary-General's report, women now occupied 35.1 per cent of geographical posts. In that connection, she wondered whether the negative impact of downsizing on their representation had been taken into account.

67. Lastly, noting the comment by the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Resources Management that his Office was trying to do things differently, she said that the Group of 77 and China were concerned that the Administration was trying to do things so differently that they were deviating from the principles and objectives of the United Nations. It was important to improve staff-management relations by creating a work environment that encouraged all staff to contribute to their maximum potential in the service of all Member States.

68. Mrs. SEALY MONTEITH (Jamaica), speaking on behalf of the 13 States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) which were Members of the United Nations, welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the strategy for the management of the Organization's human resources (A/C.5/51/1), on which the States members of CARICOM placed a high premium. In putting the strategy into effect, care should be taken to avoid damage to staff morale resulting from feelings of insecurity and uncertainty about conditions of service. She stressed the particular importance of human resources at a time of budgetary stringency.

69. In connection with the information in the report about new systems and processes that had been introduced in the areas of performance management, people management, career planning and support, and programmes for staff development, the CARICOM delegations wished to emphasize the need for a participatory approach in which staff members felt that they were part of the effort to create a new culture of excellence, rather than having a system imposed on them from above. The new Performance Appraisal System was an important management tool that was being put in place, although with some delay, and she hoped it would remain an ongoing feature of the system.

70. Referring to the mandatory People Management Training Programme, she said that the CARICOM countries were in favour of extending the programme to benefit staff other than those at senior staff levels and noted that complementary programmes for General Service and junior Professional staff were being contemplated. The strategy for human resources management hinged on the training process. In that connection, she pointed out that the motivation of the staff implied the existence of opportunities for upward mobility and hoped that that would dispel the currently prevailing malaise and pessimism among the staff. The concept of managed assignments, which offered cross-disciplinary opportunities for the acquisition of skills and the enhancement of mobility among staff, was particularly attractive.

71. One major concern of the CARICOM countries was that the junior-level staff should not be restricted and, in that connection, she commended the plan for the introduction in 1997 of a comprehensive programme of development for junior Professional staff. The national competitive examinations had proved useful in the past for identifying suitable candidates for entry at all levels of the Secretariat and were especially relevant to small States in the Caribbean that were underrepresented in the international civil service.

72. Turning to the Secretary-General's report on the composition of the Secretariat (A/51/421), she stressed the importance of the principle of geographical distribution in accordance with the Charter and called for continued efforts to give effect to the provisions of General Assembly resolution 45/239 A on ensuring the equitable geographical representation of

Member States in the Secretariat. Priority should be given to those States that were unrepresented, underrepresented or below the mid-point of the desirable range.

73. The CARICOM delegations had long supported calls for an improvement in both the numbers and status of women - a concern that was reflected in the composition of their own delegations - and noted the information provided in the Secretary-General's report on that matter (A/51/304). They looked forward to further improvement in the numbers of women in posts subject to geographical distribution, noting that very slow progress had been achieved in increasing the representation of women at the policy-making and decision-making levels of the Secretariat. In that connection, they endorsed the steps proposed in paragraph 48 of document A/C.5/51/1 to build a network of global recruitment sources and contacts, but cautioned against abandoning the means traditionally used for that purpose. Priority should be given to applying the network to the recruitment of women at the senior levels of the Secretariat.

74. The CARICOM delegations shared the concern of the Secretariat and of other Member States about the security and safety of the members of the staff of the Organization and urged Governments to respect the provisions of Article 105 of the Charter and the Conventions on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations and of the Specialized Agencies. It was important that budgetary constraints should not lead to a neglect of the issues involved.

75. In conclusion, she supported the holistic approach to modernization of the system of personnel management, in particular the incorporation of transparent mechanisms for training, evaluation and mobility. The ultimate goal must be the enhancement of the Organization through the creation of a body of international civil servants in the spirit of Article 101 of the Charter. She paid tribute to the contribution of the staff to international peace, security and development, and particularly to those members of the staff who had given their lives in the service of the Organization.

76. Mr. OUANE (Mali) said that the staff were the most important resource of the Organization and noted that some concern had been expressed in recent months about the way in which the Secretary-General's strategy for the management of human resources was being implemented. In that connection, his delegation endorsed the statement made by the representative of the Group of 77 and China to the effect that the activities undertaken tended to deviate from the initial objective of the strategy. The financial crisis that the Organization was facing should not distract attention from the need to pursue measures to provide staff training and to lay the foundations for the more effective planning of human resources.

77. The concept of equitable geographical distribution was of particular importance to the United Nations and was specifically provided for in Article 101 of the Charter. Referring to the report of the Secretary-General on the composition of the Secretariat (A/51/421), he said that the question of unrepresented and underrepfesented Member States should be a priority concern of the Secretariat, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/239 A.

78. It appeared from the report of the Secretary-General on the representation of women in the Secretariat (A/51/304) that efforts to improve the situation had

met with some measure of success. Those efforts should continue in order to attain the objective set by the relevant resolutions, particularly concerning the improvement of the representation of women at the policy-making and decision-making levels.

79. The confidence of the staff in the current reforms, the protection of their rights and the establishment of a career development plan were essential for the success of the United Nations in the areas of peacekeeping and international security, development, international cooperation and the improvement of the welfare of mankind. The successful application of the human resources development strategy would depend largely on the extent to which account was taken of the human factor and of the concerns of the staff.

80. Mr. RIVA (Argentina) said that his delegation, which supported the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, believed that human resources management was particularly important at a time of budgetary constraints and staff reductions such as those mandated by General Assembly resolutions 50/214 and 50/215, especially since personnel costs represented some 70 per cent of the regular budget. One of the Organization's major errors had been its failure to make career development the cornerstone of its human resources management policies. While it appreciated the efforts of the Secretary-General to improve management skills and to enhance the responsibility and efficacy of management personnel, his delegation was concerned to note that the approach outlined in the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/51/1) continued to be focused on helping staff members to formulate their own career plan rather than on career development, which was primarily the task of the Organization itself.

81. Efficient planning of the rotation and utilization of staff, the promotion of staff and a sense of justice and equity among the staff were essential elements in the management of human resources and contributed to the creation of a favourable working environment. In that connection, his delegation looked forward to the report on the experience with the new Performance Appraisal System referred to in paragraphs 6 to 8 of the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/51/1) so that corrective measures could be taken if necessary.

82. His delegation also wished to express its support for the implementation, beginning in 1997, of the comprehensive programme of development for junior Professionals. It was essential, in that connection, to make increased use of national competitive examinations in the recruitment of staff, correcting the geographical distribution of staff wherever possible. His delegation did not agree with the decision to recruit seven women candidates at the P-2 level outside the context of national competitive examinations, as reported in document A/51/421, paragraph 38.

83. While his delegation had no objection to the programme for the decentralization and delegation of authority, which had been in place since 1980, it considered that measures should be taken to evaluate the performance of the tasks delegated and to ensure accountability.

84. With reference to the early retirement programme, his delegation wished to know whether early retirements had helped improve the management of human resources, or whether they had merely been a means of saving money.

85. In the context of the proposed reform of the internal system of justice, his delegation supported measures to improve communication in order to resolve disputes through mediation before they reached the formal appeals stage. However, he expressed reservations as to the use of external arbitrators to replace the current joint appeals and disciplinary bodies, particularly since the selection of arbitrators implied a situation of equality between the parties, an equality which did not exist between the Secretary-General and staff members. There might therefore be a perception that the system lacked the necessary impartiality; that would be contrary to one of the fundamental objectives of the reform, which was to create a transparent system in which there were no conflicts of interest.

86. His delegation was in favour of measures to increase the representation of women in the Secretariat and considered that, as far as possible, any women recruited in the future should be from unrepresented or underrepresented countries.

87. His delegation shared the view of the Secretary-General that the Conventions on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations and of the Specialized Agencies were an essential element in the protection of international civil servants. In January 1996, his country had ratified the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and his delegation called on all Member States which were not yet Parties to that Convention to consider ratifying or acceding to it.

88. Mr. DEINEKO (Russian Federation), referring to the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the strategy for the management of the Organization's human resources (A/C.5/51/1), said that his delegation supported the ideas and principles which formed the basis of the new management culture.

89. His delegation fully accepted the importance of the principle of the highest levels of efficiency, competence and integrity and that of the complete independence of the international civil service as laid down in the Charter. It was therefore puzzling to note, in paragraph 17 of the report, that promotion to the P-3 level would be contingent on no more than satisfactory performance by staff members in their assignments. That criterion appeared to be at variance with the proposition that there was an urgent need to improve the professionalism of the staff of the United Nations Secretariat. His delegation warmly welcomed the efforts made by the Secretariat to improve the Performance Appraisal System and hoped that the additional budgetary resources needed to implement the new system would eventually produce the desired results.

90. The internal system of justice in its current form had clearly become obsolete and in need of reform. The reform should not, however, involve additional expenditure and, in that connection, his delegation supported the recommendations of the Advisory Committee (A/50/7/Add.8) that it was preferable to achieve progress at the initial stages of conciliation and the resolution of disputes and to reduce to a minimum the number of cases requiring formal hearings. Care should be exercised with regard to the Secretary-General's proposal that the work of the arbitration personnel should be professionalised, and consideration should be given to the arguments of the Administrative Tribunal contained in document A/C.5/50/2/Add.1 concerning the possible financial implications of the innovations.

91. On the subject of conditions of service, his delegation felt that the granting of career appointments should be gradually curtailed and that there should be a transition to a system of fixed-term appointments. In any case, the moratorium on the granting of career appointments should be extended at least until the process of the restructuring of the Secretariat had been completed. In connection with the need to increase the number of fixed-term appointments, he said that the Member States should always be active participants in the process of personnel recruitment. In that context, the extensive practice of secondment from government service would serve the interests of all the parties involved, namely the Organization, the Government and the staff member.

92. His delegation supported the continuing decentralization of functions which, in particular, increased managerial responsibility at the local level, and agreed that delegated management authority must be accompanied by delegated financial authority, subject, however, to the overall authority of the Office of Human Resources Management.

93. His delegation reaffirmed the principle of equitable geographical distribution and rotation among high-ranking officials of the Secretariat, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/239 A. It was gratifying to note the information contained in the Secretary-General's report concerning the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/51/304), but his delegation pointed out that the attainment of the goal of the equitable representation of women in the Secretariat should respect the principle of recruitment on the basis of the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, as set forth in the Charter.

94. On the subject of the report on the costs of staff representational activities (A/C.5/51/6), he said that his delegation had been surprised to note the exorbitant cost of such activities. It was hard to justify, for example, extensive travel by staff at the expense of the Organization, and thus at the expense of Member States, particularly in view of the fact that the largest staff organizations had ceased to cooperate with a number of expert bodies of the United Nations system. That being so, the usefulness of the costs of staff representational activities seemed to be minimal.

95. On the subject of the employment of retirees, his delegation supported most of the proposals contained in the reports of the Secretary-General and ACABQ (A/C.5/51/2 and A/51/475), but not the proposal that retirees employed by the Office of Conference Services should be exempt from he ceiling on earnings. One possibility might be to arrange for the payment of pensions to be suspended during the period when retirees were temporarily employed in the United Nations Secretariat.

96. In connection with the privileges and immunities of the officials of the United Nations and its specialized agencies, his delegation called on all Member States to become Parties to the relevant Conventions.

97. In conclusion, his delegation expressed its willingness to cooperate with other delegations in supporting any proposals that might be conducive to strengthening the authority and role of the Office of Human Resources Management.

98. Mr. LIU Yanquo (China) said that the reforms in the human resources management system had been negatively affected to some extent by the grave financial crisis facing the Organization. The aim of the measures adopted by the Secretariat since the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly had been to enhance the quality of the United Nations staff, but professionalism should by no means be confined to existing human resources; recruitment of new staff members was as important as the training of staff already in the system. The United Nations was in a unique position as an employer in that it could draw on the experience and expertise of its Member States. His delegation therefore welcomed the proposals in the Secretary-General's report (A/C.5/51/1) on strengthening cooperation with Member States, streamlining the procedures for filling vacancies, establishing a global recruitment network and enhancing the efficiency and quality of the recruitment process by fully utilizing national competitive examinations. His delegation hoped that, despite existing financial constraints, those measures would be effectively implemented.

99. Although the Member States had reached agreement on the implementation of the principles of equitable geographical distribution in the composition of the Secretariat, there were still some areas of concern, such as the problem of increasing the level of representation of nationals (including women) of developing countries both in recruitment and in promotion to high-level posts. The two principles governing personnel appointments in the United Nations were the need to ensure the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity and the principle of equitable geographical distribution. Those two principles complemented each other; neither could exist on its own. In the reform of human resources management there was a particular need to ensure that downsizing did not have a negative impact on equitable geographical distribution. In that context, his delegation was concerned that that principle should not be overlooked when the Secretary-General's proposal for the reduction of the overall size of the Secretariat was put into effect.

100. While it was gratifying to note that the percentage of women in posts subject to geographical distribution had risen by 1 per cent over the past year, his delegation was concerned that, because of the financial crisis, it had been difficult for the Organization to meet its targets for the percentage of women in decision-making and policy-making posts. His delegation welcomed the measures proposed by the Secretary-General in his report on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/51/304) and looked forward to enhanced cooperation between the Secretariat and the Member States in order to give effect to the relevant measures.

101. Finally, on the subject of the reform of the internal system of justice of the Organization, he said that his delegation agreed with the opinions expressed in the Sixth Committee on that subject and hoped that it would be possible to resolve disputes while they were still at an early stage, in particular through personnel training and enhanced management skills.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

102. Ms. DUSCHNER (Canada), supported by Ms. ALMAO (New Zealand), speaking on a point of order, noted that agenda item 140, which should have been scheduled for consideration on 28 October, had not been included in the Committee's tentative

programme of work for that week. Her delegation attached great importance to the item and wished to know when it would be taken up.

103. The CHAIRMAN said that the Bureau had taken note of the concerns just expressed and would report to the Committee on the matter in due course.

104. Mrs. INCERA (Costa Rica) said that no agreement had been reached as to how to proceed in consideration of the proposed medium-term plan. Accordingly, the wording included under programme planning in the tentative programme of work for the following week was inappropriate; reference should be made only to the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001.

105. She appealed to the Chairman to request delegations to conduct their informal discussions outside the conference room so as to reduce the high level of noise.

106. The CHAIRMAN said that future tentative programmes of work would be amended so as not to refer to consideration of groups of programmes under the agenda item on programme planning. The matter would be considered further by the Bureau.

107. Ms. PEÑA (Mexico) agreed with the representative of Costa Rica regarding the item on programme planning. As represented, it appeared that the Committee was to proceed to formal consideration of programmes without any introduction of those programmes, in contrast to previous practice. The Committee had not yet determined how to proceed.

108. Mr. HANSON (Canada) said that, since the Bureau had evidently made a decision on how the Committee was to proceed with its programme of work, the Chairman should uphold that decision.

109. The CHAIRMAN reminded delegations of the time constraints facing the Committee. He urged members to accept the proposals put forward for the conduct of the Committee's work, and stated that the concerns expressed by delegations would be taken into account.

The meeting rose at 6.45 p.m.